

# THE GULL

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY ACADEMY OF SCIENCES



CALIFORNIA

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## Two Special Days Focus on Birds

May brings two noteworthy occasions that deserve recognition: International Migratory Bird Day on May 10 and Endangered Species Day on May 16.

The aim of International Migratory Bird Day (IMBD) is to educate the public about migratory birds in the Western Hemisphere and promote their protection. The San Francisco Bay is a biodiversity hotspot partly because of its critical role as a stopover for migratory birds. May is the perfect time to see which wintering birds remain, which summer residents have arrived, and which migrants might be passing through. IMBD reminds us that the Bay Area's birds are the world's birds, and that Golden Gate Audubon plays a critical role in preventing the decline of migratory species on the Pacific Flyway.

Endangered Species Day highlights the importance of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973 in protecting over 90 species of threatened and endangered birds in the United States. More than a third reside in or migrate through California, including three notable species found in the Bay Area: the California Least Tern, which nests at Alameda Point and can be seen April through August; the California Clapper Rail, a year-round resident at Oakland's Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline Park; and the Western Snowy Plover, which can be observed foraging or resting at Ocean Beach and

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Students from Lockwood Elementary in East Oakland on an Eco-Oakland trip to Alcatraz Island.

## Eco-Oakland Program— Flying Higher than Ever

Do you think it is important for people to protect birds that are almost extinct? Almost half of the 500 third- to fifth-grade students participating in last year's Eco-Oakland Program were asked the same question before and after their year-long curriculum.

At the end of her Eco-Oakland Program experience, Melrose Elementary student Alondra Vasquez, replied, "Sí, porque los pájaros son muy importante para la naturaleza y son muy bonitos y cuando cantan, se escuchan preciosas. [Yes, because birds are important in nature, and are beautiful, and when they sing, they sound precious]." Her words were echoed by many other students in the Eco-Oakland Program; more than 70 percent of those surveyed answered positively and were able to provide a sound justification for protecting endangered species. Results of the survey were indicative of a truly successful year and supported the main goals of the Eco-Oakland Program: to inspire, empower, and engage East Oakland residents in protecting local wildlife and habitats by providing bilingual, experiential opportunities for students and their families.

Alondra's class was one of 18 from seven different East Oakland schools. Many classes had the rare opportunity to observe endangered California Clapper Rails

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## ROSTER

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The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$25 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets the last Monday of every month (except August and December) at 7:30 p.m. in the chapter office.

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Design and layout e.g. communications

# Help Protect the Future of Bay Area Wildlife and Wild Places

Legacy gifts play an important role in enabling Golden Gate Audubon to safeguard Bay Area birds and other wildlife and to inspire local residents to support our conservation, education, and birding programs. Over the past 90 years, legacy gifts have helped us save more than 1,400 acres of important habitat for federally endangered California Red-legged Frogs and Alameda Whipsnakes from development in Orinda's Gateway Valley; win strong protections for Golden Eagles, Burrowing Owls, and other raptors at the Altamont Pass Wind Resource Area; and establish our Permanent Sanctuaries Fund, which provides critical support for our conservation priorities. As Golden Gate Audubon grows into the Bay Area's leading bird and wildlife conservation organization, these gifts play an increasingly important role in providing the financial foundation to support our work on behalf of local wildlife and wild places.

Golden Gate Audubon recently launched our formal planned giving program, making it easier than ever to leave a legacy of conservation in the Bay Area. We've created a beautiful brochure that details the many planned giving options available to our members and supporters. We also established the Rara Avis Society, a select group of supporters dedicated to the long-term protection of local birds and other wildlife through planned giving. Rara Avis Society members receive exclusive society-only benefits, including a handsome certificate from Golden Gate Audubon and special invitations to Golden Gate Audubon trips and other events.

If you would like to receive a copy of our brochure, talk with our staff about planned giving options, or add your name to the Rara Avis Society roster, please contact our office at 510.843.2222. We welcome your support of our work to secure a legacy of conservation for Bay Area wildlife and habitats.



## Leaving a Legacy of Conservation

How you can support Bay Area birds, other wildlife, and their habitats for future generations

GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON

## California Coastal Conservancy Supports Eco-Oakland

Working with local governments, landowners, and nonprofit organizations like Golden Gate Audubon, the California Coastal Conservancy helps protect and restore California's magnificent coastlines. Over the next three years, Golden Gate Audubon's Eco-Oakland Program will receive \$90,000 from the agency's San Francisco Bay Conservancy Program in support of restoration efforts at Lion Creek in the Oakland Hills and the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, and for environmental education for underserved youth in East Oakland. Golden Gate Audubon thanks the conservancy for its generous support.



# Meet Golden Gate Audubon's Newest Field Trip Leaders

If you've been on Golden Gate Audubon field trips, you know how generously our expert field trip leaders share their knowledge and passion. It's easy to forget that all our leaders are volunteers whose primary reward is the satisfaction of inspiring others to appreciate birds and their environment. We are pleased to introduce two new leaders who signed up for a Golden Gate Audubon field trip leader training session last fall and have joined our team of leaders.

Oliver James, a junior at Berkeley High, has been fascinated with birds as long as he can remember. "At first, my curiosity was satisfied with simply being *aware* and excited by the avian movements around me," he says. "Birds were visible but elusive—identification was entirely determined by imagination. Names and distribution were unimportant to me. Later, when I became aware of the methodical process of identification, the diversity of birdlife came into bright focus. Each bird was now an exciting puzzle, and the possibility of meeting a new species at the next turn in the trail was an electric excitement. My fate was sealed. I've been birding ever since."

Oliver joined Golden Gate Audubon at age 10 after learning that other people felt the same passion. "I discovered the opportunity to join 'my people' and share my excitement," he says. "Golden Gate Audubon

helped me find the mentors I needed. The person who really opened my eyes and nurtured my interest is Rich Stallcup. I have many fond memories of running through Point Reyes with him as my guide."

Oliver decided to become a field trip leader so he could open others' eyes to the avian rhythms. "Every time I go out in the field and have to explain certain aspects of ID or behavior, it forces me to focus on details," he says. "The field trips are amazing learning experiences. I encourage everyone to share their knowledge and personal anecdotes at the start of the trip. So, in a way, we have 25 leaders."

Oliver is a member on the Leica Youth Team that participates in PRBO's Bird-A-Thon, and his four-member national youth team placed first in their division at the 2006 Great Texas Birding Classic. He has "chased birds and other wild creatures around the country," he notes, but his favorite spots remain the boardwalk at Jewel Lake in Tilden Regional Park and the Albany Bulb plateau at the Eastshore State Park at low tide.

John Brenneman's passion for birds grew out of his lifelong love of the outdoors. "From my early years on a Michigan farm to discovering Southern California deserts, Northern California, and the Sierras as an adult, I've always been an explorer," he says. "I was that kid who knew every bug and spider in the neighborhood. And reading John Muir's *The Mountains of California* was a revelation to me as I hitchhiked around the Northwest in the summer of 1971."

As a dedicated fly fisherman for 40-plus years, John was steeped in some of the world's best wildlife habitats, and birds competed with angling for his attention. "Then about four years ago, I heard about Golden Gate Audubon's birding classes at the Albany Adult School," he recalls. "Bob Lewis, Rusty Scalf, Denise Wight, Eddie Bartley, and others revealed the ever-expanding life of birding, and the passion these leaders shared so freely must have rubbed off on me, as here I am starting to pass it along to others."

John has already led several field trips at Upper San Leandro Reservoir, beginning at the Valle Vista Staging Area in Moraga. "The Valle Vista area was a natural place for me to start leading walks," John says. "It's close to my home and has such diverse habitat compressed into a small area—you can see it all in just a few hours. It's great for birding year-round, and I find something new nearly every time I go. I'm looking forward to sharing other favorite birding places as I become more comfortable leading trips."

—Marjorie Blackwell



Oliver James, whose favorite birding areas include the Eastshore State Park.



John Brenneman, who leads field trips to Valle Vista in Moraga.

Oliver James leads regular field trips to the Albany Bulb and other areas. John Brenneman leads trips at the Valle Vista Staging Area of Upper San Leandro Reservoir in Contra Costa County. See the field trips listing on page 6 for information on their next outings. We are always looking for new leaders to share their expertise. If you are interested, please contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839 and sign up for the next training session.



# CONSERVATION CORNER

## VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND EVENTS

**Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.**

Native plant propagation for Pier 94 and community garden work. Meet at Literacy for Environmental Justice nursery, 1150 Carroll Ave., San Francisco. Event is led by LEJ and cosponsored by Golden Gate Audubon.

**Saturday, May 3, 1 – 4 p.m.**

Improve habitat for birds and other wildlife on the coastal dunes and bluffs at Lands End in San Francisco. Meet near East Wash, west of Palace of the Legion of Honor. Wear comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes; we will provide tools, water, and snacks. Event is led by Parks Conservancy and cosponsored by Golden Gate Audubon. For directions, contact Jennifer Robinson.

**Sunday, May 4, 1 – 5 p.m.**

Monitor native and non-native plants at Pier 94 in San Francisco. Never done this before? Don't worry—we are looking for plant people and recorders alike. Join the fun and see how the new California Seablite "pups" are doing. RSVP to Jennifer Robinson if you plan to attend.

**Saturday, May 10, 8:30 a.m. – noon**

On International Migratory Bird Day, join the Presidio Park bird monitoring, starting at the Crissy Field Center in San Francisco. A full range of birding expertise is needed! GGA has been keeping records of the Presidio's birdlife for decades. In recent years, we have partnered with the Presidio Trust for special citizen-based monitoring of Presidio birds. The monitoring protocol includes more than 20 species that are indicators of the park's ecological health. All materials needed are provided to teams consisting of both beginning and expert birders. Each team walks one of eight different routes covering most areas of the park. RSVP to Jennifer Robinson.

**Saturday, May 24, 9 a.m. – noon**

Save the Quail habitat restoration workday at Harding Park in San Francisco—the last

one until September! Meet at parking lot at corner of Sunset Blvd. and Lake Merced Blvd. at the statue.

For more information on these events or for directions to any of the sites, contact Jennifer Robinson, Golden Gate Audubon's Volunteer Coordinator, at [jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org), or 510.919.5873.



Emily Hawks

Volunteers at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge.

## ALAMEDA WILDLIFE REFUGE AWAITS THE TERNS

On March 9, no fewer than 80 people—a record high—volunteered at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge for the final day devoted to preparing the nesting grounds for the endangered California Least Terns. The volunteers came from nearby Alameda and from as far away as Santa Clara and Vallejo. Among the group were many enthusiastic students, including those from Tau Beta Pi, a UC Berkeley engineering society.

### BAY AREA BIRDS from page 1

Crissy Field in San Francisco. By working to protect the places where these birds winter or breed, Golden Gate Audubon helps many other species that share their habitat.

Golden Gate Audubon offers two opportunities to participate in bird census work on May 10. One survey is at the San Francisco Presidio (see listing at left). In the East Bay, you can join the ongoing Richmond Bird Census at Point Pinole at 11 a.m. For information about both events, contact Jennifer Robinson, [jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org). You can also celebrate both days by going out and appreciating the Bay Area's rich birdlife.

In less than two hours, volunteers weeded and moved chick shelters and large oyster shell clumps off the 9.6-acre colony to make way for new sand. With full-throttle cooperation by all, the nest-site work assigned by U.S. Fish & Wildlife biologist Susan Euing was completed. Shifting tasks, the group picked up trash (including hundreds of water bottles) from more than a mile of shoreline. Altogether, the participants contributed 261.5 volunteer hours.

You can still volunteer at the refuge by participating in the Ternwatch program, which works to safeguard the nesting birds (write [leoraalameda@att.net](mailto:leoraalameda@att.net)). You can also plan on attending the Return of the Terns Festival on June 15, when buses take the public to see the nesting terns. Details will appear in the summer *Gull*.

— Leora Feeney, Chair, Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge

## Volunteer Orientation in San Francisco

Are you interested in participating in Golden Gate Audubon's volunteer activities but don't know where to start? Join us for our spring Volunteer Orientation at the Randall Museum, San Francisco, on Wednesday, May 28, 7 – 8:30 p.m. Learn more about Golden Gate Audubon, meet new people, and enjoy some good pizza! Free parking is provided in the museum lot. For transportation information, go to [www.randallmuseum.org](http://www.randallmuseum.org).





# SPEAKER SERIES

SARAH REED

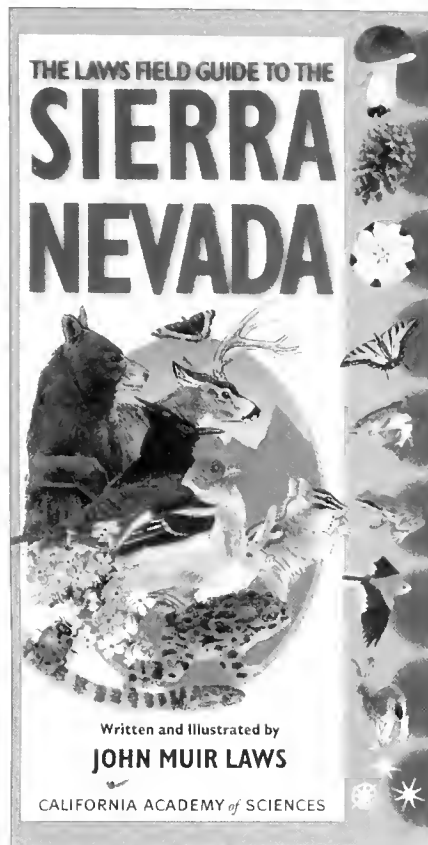
COORDINATOR

Talks in the Speaker Series begin at 7:30 p.m.

## Exploring the Sierra Nevada as a Naturalist and an Artist

John (Jack) Muir Laws

Berkeley: Thursday, May 15

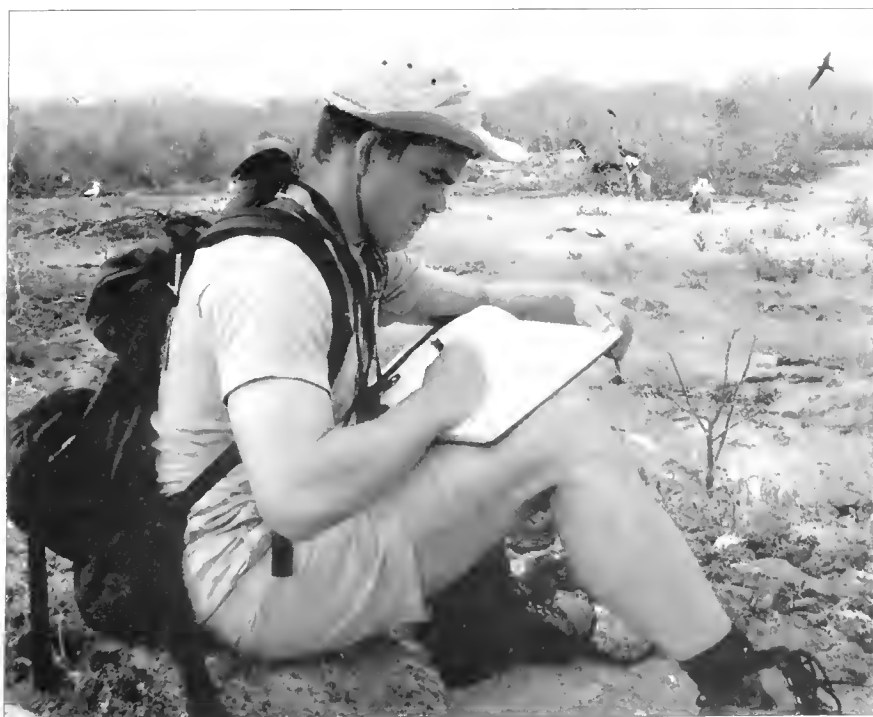


Come explore the natural history of the Sierra Nevada with John (Jack) Muir Laws and also discover how he goes about creating a field guide. In addition to presenting an illustrated talk, Laws will display original illustrations that he has painted in the field.

In his illustrations, Laws captures the feeling of the living plant or animal while also including details critical for identification. In the summer of 2004, he published *Sierra Birds: A Hiker's Guide*. His most recent book, *The Laws Guide to the Sierra Nevada*, is an illustrated field guide to more than 1,700 species of plants and animals and is beautifully illustrated

with 2,710 original watercolor paintings. This comprehensive and easy-to-use guide allows botanists to identify the insects that come to the flowers, birders to identify the trees in which the birds perch, and hikers to identify the stars overhead at night.

Naturalist, educator, artist, and author Jack Laws delights in



Jack Muir Laws sketching at the Galápagos Islands.



Immature White-crowned Sparrow, a watercolor illustration by Jack Muir Laws.

exploring the natural world and sharing this passion with others. He has worked as an environmental educator for more than 25 years in California, Wyoming, and Alaska. Trained as a wildlife biologist, he is an associate of the California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco. He has written and illustrated field guides on the natural history of California and teaches classes on natural history, conservation biology, scientific illustration, and field sketching. Laws is currently coordinating efforts to create a curriculum to tie his Sierra Nevada field guide to the State of California education standards and secure funding to donate sets of field guides to every elementary and high school in the Sierra Nevada. He is also a regular contributor to *Bay Nature* magazine, where he creates a regular "Naturalist's Notebook" featuring his illustrations.

## Field Sketching Birds

John (Jack) Muir Laws

San Francisco: Tuesday, May 27

At this evening's program, you will have an extraordinary opportunity to learn how to make quick field sketches of landbirds, shorebirds, and waterfowl with guidance and professional tips from wildlife artist Jack Laws. During this hands-on workshop, you'll pick up valuable tricks that will enable you to get down the shape and proportion of birds in a quick sketch and then fill in details with an improved understanding of bird anatomy. Laws will give advice on rendering proportion and shape, wings, shorebird necks, plumage, and legs, and on drawing ducks on the water. By sketching what you see, you can become more observant and document your birding experience—and even get ready to record a rare-bird sighting.

No previous drawing experience is necessary. Please bring pencils and a sketchbook (or clipboard and paper) to the event.

**Berkeley:** Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda (between Solano and Marin).

Directions: [www.northbrae.org/directions.htm](http://www.northbrae.org/directions.htm)

**San Francisco:** County Fair Building, SF Botanical Garden, Golden Gate Park, 9th Avenue at Lincoln Way.

Directions: [www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html](http://www.sfbotanicalgarden.org/visiting/page2.html)

For questions about individual field trips, contact the leaders. If you cannot reach a leader, contact Pam Belchamber at 510.549.2839. Field trips are also listed on the Golden Gate Audubon website at [www.goldengateaudubon.org](http://www.goldengateaudubon.org).

## Jewel Lake in Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Friday, May 2, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, 510.848.9156,  
[philajane6@yahoo.com](mailto:philajane6@yahoo.com)

Meet at parking lot at north end of Central Park Dr. for a 1-mile stroll through this lush riparian area. If you question whether spring has arrived in all its glory, come to Jewel Lake. Black-headed Grosbeaks, Warbling Vireos, Swainson's Thrushes, and Winter Wrens are the lead singers in the chorus. Mark the first Friday of the month on your calendar for these Jewel Lake rambles.

## San Francisco Botanical Garden

Saturday, May 3, 10 a.m. – noon

Angie Geiger and Nancy DeStefanis,  
 SF Nature Education; Darin Dawson, SF  
 Botanical Garden docent, 415.387.9160,  
[www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org)

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. Families welcome. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Cosponsored by Botanical Garden, SF Nature Education, and Golden Gate Audubon.

## Heron Watch at Stow Lake

For three more Saturdays—May 3, 10, and 17—you can join San Francisco Nature Education interns in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park to observe and learn about the Great Blue Herons nesting at Stow Lake. Spotting scopes are available for close-up looks at the adult birds and their young from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. each day. From 10:30 a.m. to noon, a naturalist will lead a nature walk around Stow Lake. Great Blue Herons have returned to Stow Lake in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park to court, mate, and raise their young since 1993. To date, 111 chicks have fledged from the colony.

Heron Watch activities are free and are also sponsored by Golden Gate Audubon. Follow the signs from the Stow Lake boathouse to the observation site. For more information, visit [www.sfnature.org](http://www.sfnature.org) or call 415.387.9160.

## Upper San Leandro Reservoir

Contra Costa County

Sunday, May 4, 8 a.m. – noon

John Brenneman, 510.531.1239,  
[kokorourke@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kokorourke@sbcglobal.net)

We will walk the wooded trail near the Upper San Leandro Reservoir from the EBMUD Valle Vista Staging Area to look for year-round residents and spring arrivals.

From Oakland, take Redwood Rd. over hill and turn left onto Pinehurst Rd. At Canyon Rd. junction, turn right and travel .5 mile, then turn right into the EBMUD Valle Vista Staging Area lot. Alternate route is via Hwy. 24 Orinda exit to Moraga Rd., turn right on Canyon Rd. From there, it is a short drive to Valle Vista lot on left.

## San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sunday, May 4, 8 – 10:30 am

Alan Ridley, [allanrid@pacbell.net](mailto:allanrid@pacbell.net);  
 Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241;  
 Ginny Marshall, 650.349.3780

Meet at front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This delightful section of the park has several micro-habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. This monthly trip is oriented toward helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds.

## Garin Regional Park

Hayward

Saturday, May 10, 8 – 11:30

Anne Hoff, [anne2210b@sbcglobal.net](mailto:anne2210b@sbcglobal.net),  
 925.229.4908

We'll look for breeders in spring plumage, including Western Bluebirds, goldfinches and finches, orioles, swallows, and sparrows. There is a lot of opportunity to see raptors over the park's hillside.

Take I-880 to Hayward and exit at Tennyson Rd. (exit 26). Drive east on Tennyson to junction with Mission Blvd., turn right, and drive south about 1 mile. Turn left on Garin Ave. and follow signs to park. Meet in parking lot nearest the creek to the left after the entrance kiosk.

## Wildcat Canyon Regional Park

Contra Costa County

Saturday, May 10, 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Malcolm Sproul, 925.376.8945

Meet by Arlington Clubhouse on Arlington Ave. in El Cerrito, next to tennis courts between Brewster Dr. and Thors Bay Rd. We'll drive to Wildcat Canyon trailhead on Rifle Range Rd., then walk a hilly transect of the canyon to bird brushlands, oak woodlands, riparian streamsides, and grasslands. This is the 29th year that Malcolm has led the 6-mile hike in Wildcat Canyon. Bring lunch and liquids.

## Vollmer Peak in Tilden Regional Park

Berkeley

Saturday, May 10, 8 – 11 a.m.

Emilie Strauss, 510.540.8749

We'll walk 2 to 3 miles to explore the bird-life around 1,913-foot Vollmer Peak, in the southeast corner of Tilden Regional Park. We expect to see California Thrasher, possibly MacGillivray's Warbler, and Rufous-crowned Sparrows if we hike out far enough.

From I-80, take Ashby Ave. exit and go east on Ashby. Turn left on Claremont and follow it up Claremont Canyon to intersection with Grizzly Peak Blvd. Turn left on Grizzly Peak and continue a couple miles. Take first right just past Lomas Contadas, then veer right and go up hill. Road dead-ends at trailhead to Vollmer Peak.

## Corona Heights

**Friday, May 16, 8 – 10 a.m.**

Charles Hibbard; Lewis Ellingham; Brian Fitch; Margaret Goodale, [mgoodale@randallmuseum.org](mailto:mgoodale@randallmuseum.org), 415.554.9600 ext. 16

Meet in front of Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking the east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring the hilltop scrub and south cliff.

## California Condors at Big Sur

**Saturday, May 17, noon – 4 p.m.**

Richard and Linda Kincaid, [condorchick@gmail.com](mailto:condorchick@gmail.com); for further information: Pam Belchamber, [pbelchamber@earthlink.net](mailto:pbelchamber@earthlink.net), 510.549.2839

Come to Big Sur to see California Condors on this trip offered exclusively to Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Members. Leaders and participants will caravan to accessible viewing locations, using radio telemetry to locate condors in the wild. Spotting scopes are provided. A tax-deductible donation of \$50 per person to Golden Gate Audubon is required. Trip is suitable for all ages and abilities, and is *limited to 16 participants*. To reserve a space, contact Kristen Bunting, [ggas@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:ggas@goldengateaudubon.org) or 510.843.2222. Payment is due to Golden Gate Audubon by Friday, May 2. Participants should bring binoculars, water, and snacks/lunch, and wear warm, layered clothing.

Meet at Big Sur Lodge. Take Hwy. 101 south to Hwy. 156 west. Connect to Hwy. 1 south and continue through Monterey/Carmel. Big Sur Lodge is 26 miles south of Carmel in Pfeiffer Big Sur State Park. Turn left into park and follow signs to lodge. Allow 3 hours of driving time (150 mi.) each way.

## Tilden Regional Park

**Sunday, May 18, 7:30 – 10 a.m.**

Oliver James, 510.524.7093, [oliverjames91@gmail.com](mailto:oliverjames91@gmail.com)

Meet at the Nature Area parking lot. We will search Jewel Lake and surrounding areas for returning migrants.

## Lake Merced and Lakeview Park

**Wednesday, May 28, 9:30 a.m. – noon**

Bob Lewis, [bob@wingbeats.org](mailto:bob@wingbeats.org)

Meet at large spherical cage near Nature Center at Perkins and Bellevue. We will bird around there, then go up garden path toward Children's Fairyland or walk down lake toward Embarcadero, after which we will cover what we missed. The nesting season should be going strong, and we may find some migrant song birds.

Take 12, N, or NL bus to Grand and Perkins, and walk into park on Perkins. Best parking is at boathouse lot near spherical cage. Entry (via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland) is free on weekdays.

## Yosemite National Park

**Friday – Sunday, May 30 – June 1**

Dave Quady, 510.704.9353, [davequady@att.net](mailto:davequady@att.net)

Space may still be available on this extended trip to see the rich birdlife of

Yosemite National Park, including seven flycatchers (four Empidonax), three vireos, seven warblers, and many other species in full song and breeding plumage. Trip is limited to 20 participants. Contact leader for information on availability and other details.

## Bolsa Chica Wetlands

**Friday – Sunday, June 20 – 22**

Rusty Scalf, [rscalf@sonic.net](mailto:rscalf@sonic.net)

In early April, Rusty went to Bolsa Chica to scout the area in preparation for a June field trip. The wetlands and other areas in Huntington Beach boast a bird list of more than 300 species. For information about this amazing birding area, see the Bolsa Chica Conservancy website at [www.bolsachica.org](http://www.bolsachica.org). Watch for details about the trip on the Golden Gate website and in the summer *Gull*.

## Volunteers Needed for San Francisco Bird Surveys

Golden Gate Audubon is revving up three bird surveys in the city. Whether you've been part of projects like this before or are interested in participating for the first time, we are looking for volunteers like you. If you want to join any of the survey teams below, contact Jennifer Robinson, Golden Gate Audubon Volunteer Coordinator, 510.919.5873 or [jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org](mailto:jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org).

- **San Francisco Waterfront:** Golden Gate Audubon and San Francisco Bay Bird Observatory (SFBBO) are again partnering to count birds along San Francisco's southeastern waterfront. Weekly monitoring by volunteers with binoculars or a spotting scope starts in June and runs through August. Last year, volunteer surveyors confirmed the first-ever confirmed sighting of Black Skimmers in the city. This year, we will be surveying Caspian Terns to see if they locate a new nesting site.
- **Hérons and Egrets at Lake Merced:** The lake is a key area for Golden Gate Audubon and SFBBO projects. GGA has been holding monthly workdays at Harding Park and yearly surveys with SFBBO. Join us in expanding our efforts. Volunteers with a spotting scope are needed for a weekly census, continuing through July 31, of Lake Merced's nesting waterbirds and cormorants.
- **Bank Swallows at Ocean Beach:** Bank Swallows are declining in population because of habitat loss. The species has specialized breeding needs; at Ocean Beach, as elsewhere, the birds nest in burrows in a sand bank. The survey offers an opportunity to provide important data to scientists who are monitoring both the status of the Bank Swallow and the success rate of this local breeding site. Volunteers should have a spotting scope. The swallows are here only during the summer, so this is when we need your help. The survey runs through July.

## East Bay Classes

Golden Gate Audubon is sponsoring two summer classes through the Albany Adult School, 601 San Gabriel Avenue, Albany. Register online at <http://albany.k12.ca.us/adult/> or call 510.559.6580 for more information.

## Summer Birding

Tuesday, June 24, 7 – 9 p.m., plus six Wednesday evening field trips, June 25 – July 23, 6 – 9 p.m.

Summer is not the time to put away your binoculars. Evening walks can be filled with interesting bird sightings, sounds, and behaviors. These field trips will focus on birds as they continue breeding or tend to their recently fledged young, while also contending with the intense heat or cooling fog in the summer months here in the San Francisco Bay Area. We will also be on the lookout for birds already migrating south. For more information, visit [www.blkittiwake.com](http://www.blkittiwake.com).

## Birds and Butterflies: Easy Garden Enchantment with California Native Plants

Tuesdays, July 15 – August 5, 7 – 9 p.m., plus one field trip to be announced

Find out how to welcome birds, butterflies, and other beneficial critters—and become captivated by the beauty of native plants as you learn year-round ecological gardening. Gorgeous slide shows, invaluable environmental and natural history information, and easy garden management lessons will help you create an enchanting wildlife habitat. Materials fee is \$5, payable to instructor. For more information, email [corinnelouisedesign@yahoo.com](mailto:corinnelouisedesign@yahoo.com) or go to [www.thegardenisateacher.com](http://www.thegardenisateacher.com).

## Summer in the Sierra Nevada

Space may still be available in Golden Gate Audubon's Birds of the Sierra classes, held in the Yuba Pass area between Sierra City and Sierraville. Both sessions include field trips to look for some of the special birds of the area. Birds of the Sierra I, taught by Rusty Scalf and Bob Lewis, meets Thursday–Sunday, June 12–15. Birds of the Sierra II, taught by Eddie Bartley and Bob Lewis, meets Thursday–Sunday, June 19–22. The fee of \$80 for Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Members (\$90 for nonmembers) includes a lecture and dinner. Enrollees pay separately for room and other meals. Call Kristen Bunting, Golden Gate Audubon office manager, at 510.843.2222 to sign up.

## New San Francisco Class

### Wild Birds of San Francisco — An Introduction

Eddie Bartley, [eddie@audubon.org](mailto:eddie@audubon.org)

Tuesdays, July 15 – August 12, 7 – 9 p.m., with field trips on the Sunday following each class

Join a fun and enthusiastic group for an introduction to many of the amazing birds that inhabit San Francisco and discover the local habitats where they can be found. Presentations include colorful bird imagery, information on optics and field guides, identification techniques, avian physiology, and a little taxonomy. Participants will have an opportunity to see resident and summer breeding birds raising new families and meet birds returning from their northerly breeding range.

The class will be held at the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way. Plenty of free parking is provided in the museum lot. The class fee is \$70. To sign up, contact Kristen Bunting, Golden Gate Audubon office manager, at 510.843.2222.

## Donations

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

Anonymous, Jean & Bruce Conner, Katherine & Randall C. Erickson

Pamela & Robert Howard

Virginia P. Coleman, Laura D. & Mark C. Collins, Dr. Meryl Gordon & Dr. Robert Schermer, Prakash Sootarsing, Ruth & Alan Tobey

Aquarium of the Bay, Tony Arjo, Jack R. Bertges, Caroline & Corwin Booth, Charles Schwab Corp. Foundation, James W. Clarke, Steve Collins & Ken Prag, Susan Diridoni & Satoru Fujii, Judith L. Dunham

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Lee & Margaret Karney





# OBSERVATIONS

BRUCE MAST

MARCH 1 - 31, 2008

**M**arch saw a noteworthy "invasion" of *Crested Caracaras* (*Caracara plancus*) in the state, including sightings at Kern River Preserve (KER) and Santa Barbara (SBA). Here at home, a caracara was spotted on Mar. 7 in Coyote Valley, SCL, near the junction of Laguna and Bailey Ave. (RF, LP, SP, RP). This sighting comes just 3 weeks after a caracara was photographed at Año Nuevo SR, SM, as reported last month.

## LOONS TO DUCKS

On Mar. 13th, a Northern Fulmar ventured into SF Bay as far as San Leandro Marina, ALA (BR). A Pigeon Pt., SM, seawatch on the 22nd yielded a Short-tailed Shearwater riding the winds (RT). A Redhead stopped in at the City of Hayward Ponds, ALA, on the 17th (BR). The Tufted Duck at L. Merritt in Oakland, ALA, was last reported on the 7th (mob).



U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Northern Fulmar.

The Harlequin Duck at Heron's Head, SF, continued to attract admirers through the 25th (DM). Other Harlequins were noted on the 6th at Mussell Rock in Daly City, SM (DP), and on the 31st at Pigeon Pt., SM (RT). Long-tailed Ducks contributed to the entertainment at Sutro Baths, SF (BF); Emeryville Marina, ALA (BB); Miller-Knox RP at Pt. Richmond, CC (DRh); Pigeon Pt., SM (RT); and Bodega Harbor, SON (LL, CL).



Ruth (Rudi) Dundas

Rudi Dundas photographed this Crested Caracara on February 14 at Año Nuevo State Reserve on the San Mateo coast. She and ranger Terri Kiser observed the juvenile bird feeding on a dead seal pup along with ravens and a coyote. Other sightings of Crested Caracara occurred in March.

## HAWKS TO WILDOGS

Returning Swainson's Hawks were observed overhead on the 9th at in the Presidio, SF (ADM), and on the 23rd along Mountain House Rd., ALA (KR; BP). Overwintering Ferruginous Hawks remained along Livermore Rd., ALA (RC); at Grant Ranch, SCL (RP; SP); and in Oakley, CC (KJ).

A canoe trip up the Petaluma River, SON, on the 18th, confirmed a Black Rail in the marshes (DE). A Pacific Golden-Plover continued at Shollenberger Park, Petaluma, SON, through Mar. 9 (AW). The SOL Mountain Plover flock remained faithful to its wintering site near Hwy. 113

through the 4th (JR). The Mar. 22 Pigeon Pt. seawatch recorded a Pomarine Jaeger and 16 Black-legged Kittiwakes (RT). Glaucous Gulls rewarded patient gull watchers at 7 locations.

## OWLS TO KINGBIRDS

A Short-eared Owl was observed Mar. 5 at Las Gallinas Ponds, MRN (DE), and teams of 3 or 4 gave nightly performances at Coyote Valley, Richmond Ave., SCL (RP, mob), and Huichica Wildlife Area, NAP (FO). The Northern Saw-whet Owl on Ryer Island, NAP, stuck around through the 11th (DRo, TJ, RL). A Red-naped Sapsucker hit a window in the Oakland Hills, ALA, and expired on Mar. 12 (VSB). A yellow-shafted Northern Flicker spent a week at the Randall Museum, SF, starting the 6th (DM). On the 15th, a Cassin's Kingbird was noted along Coyote Cr., SCL (MDe, JG, RP). A Townsend's Solitaire vainly searched for juniper berries at Sunol RP, ALA, on the 29th (SH).

## VARIOUS WARBLED TO FINCHES

The only warblers of note were a Palm Warbler singing behind Nob Hill Market in Redwood Shores, SM, on the 15th (RT) and continuing Palm Warblers at D'Anna Yacht Center, Oakland, ALA (KS), and Huffaker Park, SF (DM). Continuing *Emberizids* included a Clay-colored Sparrow in Fremont, ALA (CW), and a Lapland Longspur at Hayward RS, ALA (BR).

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviation "mob" = many observers; "bob" = other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions. Special thanks to Brent Plater for assistance in compiling data.

**Abbreviations for Observers:** ADM, Al DeMartini, AE, Al Eisner, AH, Alan Hopkins, AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo, AW, Alan Wright, BB, Bob Brandriff, BD, Bob Dunn, BF, Brian Fitch, BP, Bob Power, BR, Bob Richmond, CL, Cindy Lieurance, CW, Charles Woodrum, DE, Daniel Edelstein, DM, Dominik Mosur, DP, Don Pendelton, DRh, Dennis Rhodes, DRo, Diane Pose, DW, David Wimpfheimer, FO, Frances Oliver, JG, Josh Goodwin, JP, Jeff Poklen, JR, Jean Richmond, KJ, Kathy Jarrett, KR, Kathy Robertson, KS, Kirk Swenson, LL, Les Lieurance, LP, Lori Parsons, MDe, Melissa Dekoven, MM, Michael Mammoser, NS, Nancy Schorr, PS, Paul Schorr, RC, Rich Cimino, PF, Rosita Fakhrevaee, RL, Robin Leong, RP, Ryan Phillips, PT, Ron Thorn, SH, Steve Huckabone, SP, Sami Phillips, TJ, Tim Jenkins, TO, Trent Orr, VSB, Viola Saima-Barklow.

**Abbreviations for Counties and Others:** ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa, CCFS, Coyote Creek Field Station; CP, County Park, Cr., Creek, Cyn., Canyon, DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge, EEC, Environmental Education Center, GGP, Golden Gate Park, KER, Kern, L., Lake, MRN, Marin, Mt., Mount, N., North, NAP, Napa, NWR, National Wildlife Refuge, OSP, Open Space Preserve, PRNS, Pt Reyes National Seashore, Pt., Point, Rd., Road, Res., Reservoir, RP, Regional Park, RS, Regional Shoreline, S., South, SB, State Beach, SBA, Santa Barbara; SCL, Santa Clara, SF, San Francisco, SFBBO, SF Bay Bird Observatory, SM, San Mateo, SOL, Solano, SON, Sonoma, SP, State Park, SR, State Reserve, WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant.

# Birders Canvass Alameda County for Big Year

A group of East Bay birders are in the middle of a "big year," as they strive to identify as many species as they can in the course of a calendar year. Some birders do a world big year, others do a North America big year, and still others do a state big year. We're covering a single county for the Alameda Big Year. There's a new format for a local big year: the eco-big year. For this version, participants tally birds seen without using their fuel-burning vehicle.

Most counties have a big year record to shoot for. Joe Morlan's California birding website lists big year records along with each county's statistics. The record for Santa Clara County is 291; for Contra Costa County, 255. For Alameda County, the category for "Top Big Year" has the following entry: "none known." If that doesn't get your competitive juices flowing, I don't know what will. I suspect that long-time local birders such as Art Edwards, Bob Richmond, or John Luther would all have superb big year totals from their experience in the county, but just haven't shared their results.

As 2007 came to a close, several rare birds lingered in the area, making for an excellent start to my 2008 list: Tufted Duck at Lake Merritt in Oakland, Tropical Kingbird and Lapland Longspur at the Hayward Regional Shoreline, and Palm Warbler in Oakland's Estuary Park. As I contemplated starting off the year on January 1 with a big day, that thought made me wonder, Why not a big year? I could write something here about being motivated by wanting more communication among local birders or wanting to bring the East Bay birding community together, but, frankly, a big year just plain sounded like fun.

To that end, on January 1—after my big day of birding—I put out the word on EBB Sightings, the online list for reporting sightings administered by Diablo Audubon. The response was enthusiastic, and we're now in the thick of it. Bob Lewis generously volunteered to devote space on his website ([www.wingbeats.org](http://www.wingbeats.org)) to highlight the effort. Twelve known players are being tracked on a monthly basis, with at least five others who have contacted me expressing interest



Chuck Woodrum

*Clay-colored Sparrow (foreground) and White-crowned Sparrow. This Clay-colored Sparrow first showed up at Chuck Woodrum's birdfeeders in late December of 2007 and remained in the area through early spring.*

and who may pop up later in the year with their totals. The website shows the cumulative list of birds seen in the county this year, along with the individual participant totals. Running parallel to our big year is the Contra Costa County Big Year pioneered by Denise Wight and also being tracked at [wingbeats.org](http://wingbeats.org).

Without a doubt, it has been fun. The Yellow Rail seen at Arrowhead Marsh at Oakland's Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline on January 20 was a life experience for me and for the other birders who showed up for the high tide. Needing a Prairie Falcon, I headed out to Patterson Pass in eastern Alameda with three other Alameda Big Year birders (Bruce Mast, Barbara Brandriff, and Bob Brandriff). Hopping out of our vehicles, all four of us got a look at a falcon soaring beautifully for a moment and then gone—just like a falcon. That was a thrill. I also remember when I got out of my car at Redwood Regional Park—which strides Alameda and Contra Costa counties—just as a Pileated Woodpecker let loose with its king-of-the-forest call. Was the bird in the county or outside the county? So many highlights, and the year is not even halfway gone.

The birds will provide wonderful mem-

ories, but the people are the most fun. Chuck Woodrum's Clay-colored Sparrow in Fremont wins best supporting role for the Alameda Big Year. Chuck opened his front and back yards to many big year participants as well as birders from around the region to see this little east-of-the-Rockies vagrant. Exchanging notes with participants and area experts has been educational, humbling, and in the best spirit of a good competition.



Bob Power

*Surfbird at the San Leandro Marina.*

I've visited parks I've never been to before, places in the county I've never been to before, and places in the county where I haven't been in years. My strategy is to

track down the rare birds seen by others, visit the migrant traps as often as possible, and plan for birds I know are here but are not easy to find. I have a fresh set of street maps from AAA and a new bicycle for San Francisco Bay Trail excursions. I'm worried about the Glaucous Gull and the Rufous Hummingbird—birds I missed but not for lack of trying. I went out seven times to Patterson Pass and never found the Mountain Bluebirds first reported by Bruce Mast.

But I'm now looking ahead: I want to kayak around the breakwaters of Oakland Harbor and see if the Coyote Point Harlequin Duck spends time on the eastern side of the bay. I'd like to see one of the

two Crested Caracaras haunting the California coast come sailing through Alameda County. I've yet to wake up in the middle of the night and scream "Indigo Bunting!" But the year is still young. Ready to join in?

— by Bob Power

*Bob Power is executive director of Santa Clara Valley Audubon. He also leads field trips and teaches birding classes. He is an avid photographer who shares his photographs along with his sightings.*

*Lists of species seen by participants in the Alameda and Contra Costa big years are at [www.wingbeats.org](http://www.wingbeats.org). To sign up for EBB sightings, go to [www.diabloaudubon.com](http://www.diabloaudubon.com).*



Tufted Duck at Lake Merritt

## 2008 Board Election—Make Your Vote Count

The 2008 election for the membership to choose three directors for the Golden Gate Audubon Board of Directors will take place by written ballot. The board's Development Committee, with the approval of the board, has nominated the candidates listed below. Thirty-five ballots are needed to meet the quorum requirement of the GGA bylaws.

Members in good standing may vote by completing and signing the ballot form below and returning it to the GGA office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94702.

**Deadline for receipt of ballots is June 16, 2008.**

### ERIC BIBER

Eric Biber is the chair of Golden Gate Audubon's Board Development Committee. He is a law professor at the University of California at UC Berkeley, where he teaches environmental and

natural resources law, as well as conducts research in the field. Birding is among his many outdoor interests.

### LEORA FEENEY

Leora Feeney, a biologist, is chair of Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, one of GGA's three conservation committees. For nearly three decades, she has been dedicated to protecting the nesting colony of endangered California Least Terns at the refuge and to establishing the site as a national wildlife refuge under the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

### PHIL PRICE

Phil Price is chair of GGA's East Bay Conservation Committee. An enthusiastic birder, he is a physicist at the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory. He has served on Berkeley's Parks and Recreation Commission and on the city's Creeks Task Force.

## Ballot for Election of Golden Gate Audubon Directors

Ballots received by the June 16, 2008, ballot deadline will be counted in accordance with the choice specified for each candidate.

### DIRECTOR NOMINEE

### TERM ENDING

Eric Biber	2011
Leora Feeney	2011
Phil Price	2011

MEMBER NAME

MEMBER SIGNATURE

The success of the Eco-Oakland Program is due in large part to the enthusiasm and support from the many community members who regularly participate in our classroom lessons, afterschool programs, field trips, and community restoration events. There are many environmental education programs within the Bay Area, but very few offer hands-on opportunities for parents and children to learn together and act on ways to protect the ecosystems in which they reside. Weekend family trips to the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Muir Beach in Marin County, Aquarium of the Bay in San Francisco, and Alcatraz Island are certainly the major highlights and offer participants experiences to observe the myriad

Funding for the Eco-Oakland Program has enabled community members to receive stipends for their assistance within the last year. Five parent liaisons have been trained and hired to help with the implementation of the program, providing an enormous contribution to the organization. Six high school students from East Oakland served as paid interns while leading groups during weekend family trips and afterschool activities. Naturalists from the Parks Conservancy on Alcatraz were particularly grateful for Castlemont High School senior Susana Tinoco's production of outstanding bilingual educational handouts that highlight all the major birds on Alcatraz. The handouts have been used regularly for the general public.

After analyzing the results of the recent Eco-Oakland Program student surveys, we discovered that 90 percent of the respondents claimed that they felt like they could make a difference in their community and environment, a 38 percent increase from the beginning of the program. We hope that with the support of their families and community members, young Eco-Oakland Program students can achieve greatness.

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